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THUNDERCLAN CATS

I do not own any original characters or Clans. Enjoy this warriors fans.

Clan Leader

Bramblestar

Deputy

Lionblaze

Medicine Cat

Jayfeather

Apprentice, Shadecloud

Warriors

Icecloud

Sandstorm

Graystripe

Falcontail

Wavefur

Berrynose

Toadstep

Rosepetal

Sorreltail

Lilyblossom

Apprentice, Grasspaw

Seedfur

Apprentice, Cavepaw

Poppyfrost

Cherrypelt

Molefur

Millie

Thornclaw

Spiderleg

Dustpelt

Floodface

Brackenfur

Apprentice, Groundpaw

Flowerburst

Woodpelt

Birchfall

Mousewhisker

Ivypool

Cloudtail

Brightheart

Bumblestripe

Blossomfall

Queens (she-cats nursing or expecting kits)

Cinderheart (nursing Lionblaze's kits; Pondkit, Sunkit)

Daisy

Dovewing (expecting Bumblestripe's kits)

Elders

Purdy

Graystripe

Prologue

PROLOGUE

Seedfur trotted through the forest. The only sounds were the faint thuds of Seedfur's pawsteps. He trotted onwards, following the route he had taken many times before. And he stopped at the half-bridge and waited.

After a few moments of waiting, the leaves rustled and a gray tom with white stripes padded forward. They greeted each other like old friends. The gray tom was named Thorn, and he was Bone's grandson. He never knew what it was like to live in BloodClan for it had ceased moons before he was born. Thorn had agreed to help Seedfur to satisfy his ambitions and now it was time for planning. "Hello, Seedfur," Thorn meowed.

"Hello, Thorn," Seedfur meowed. "I need your help. Bramblestar can be brought down by force, but Lionblaze is another story."

"Quite simple," Thorn meowed.

"How do you think he can die?" Seedfur asked Thorn.

"Just stuff a mouse with deathberries. It's truly simple. Every cat has a weakness," Thorn answered.

"Thorn, you're brilliant. Should we execute the plan now?" Seedfur asked.

"No," Thorn said. "Let ShadowClan take care of a few of them, and then we can take over easier."

"After two battles with ShadowClan, then?" Seedfur asked Thorn.

"Yes. You can meet me here at moonhigh. We will rule ThunderClan, and we will take over the other Clans after that," Thorn said.

“I will see you then. May the Dark Forest darken your path,” Seedfur meowed.

“And yours,” Thorn said, dipping his head.

Behind the bushes, a cat crouched, watching in disbelief.

It was Shadecloud.

Chapter 1: Shadecloud

SHADECLOUD

Two sunrises had passed since Shadecloud had seen Seedfur talking to Thorn. She couldn't believe that Seedfur would betray his Clan. He seemed like a good cat, but obviously he wasn't. How could she protect her Clan when Bramblestar wouldn't even talk to any cat?

Seedfur was talking with Sandstorm, eating a vole that looked plump and juicy. The fur on Shadecloud's neck bristled. How did that traitor dare to take ThunderClan's prey? Shadecloud walked over to Seedfur. "Shouldn't you be doing something useful instead of making yourself fat?" she snarled at him.

Seedfur looked surprised. "What? I just got back from the dawn patrol and I sat down to eat with Sandstorm for a moment," he said.

Shadecloud looked him in the eyes. "I'll be watching you," she said as Seedfur swallowed the last bite of his vole.

"Hey, I'm going hunting with Falcontail now. What in StarClan's name is wrong with you?" Seedfur asked, feigning innocence.

"Get moving then," Shadecloud hissed.

"All right, I'm going," he meowed as he trotted off, acting confused about Shadecloud's harshness.

"What has gotten into you, Shadecloud?" Sandstorm asked. "Seedfur wasn't doing anything wrong."

"He's a traitor," Shadecloud spat.

"Seedfur? A traitor?" Sandstorm echoed.

"No one thought Tigerstar was a traitor either," Shadecloud meowed somberly.

Shadecloud told Sandstorm about seeing Seedfur with Thorn. Sandstorm was looking at her intensely. "Why haven't you told Bramblestar?" Sandstorm asked her.

Shadecloud snorted. "That would do as much good as a load of fox dung," she said. "You know as well as I do that Bramblestar spends all day moping around inside his den."

"He lost his mate," Sandstorm said.

"So did you and you're not pouting," Shadecloud responded.

Sandstorm sighed. "I suppose you're right. He is acting like Bluestar was back in the old forest."

"I hope he recovers before Seedfur tries to kill him," Shadecloud meowed gravely.

Chapter 2:Lionblaze

LIONBLAZE

Lionblaze stared at the morning sky, wondering once again how much longer he could hold ThunderClan together on his own. Would the old Bramblestar ever return?

The rest of ThunderClan seemed to know that Bramblestar was in a deep depression. They seemed to realize that Lionblaze was pretty much their leader. No cat had objected when Lionblaze performed the ceremony to send Graystripe to the elder's den. Lionblaze had even had to yell at Grasspaw for asking him when he was going to appoint a deputy.

Lionblaze walked into Bramblestar's den. Bramblestar had left the mouse Lionblaze had brought him last night untouched and he looked like he hadn't groomed himself since the battle with ShadowClan over a moon ago. The Gathering was two days from now. ThunderClan hadn't even gone to the last Gathering, and Lionblaze told himself that he would take the cats to the Gathering if Bramblestar wouldn't.

"Bramblestar!" Lionblaze called.

The ThunderClan leader didn't even open his eyes.

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It was sunhigh on the day of the Gathering and Bramblestar was still moping around in his den. "Bramblestar, we need you to take us to the Gathering," Lionblaze said.

Bramblestar didn't respond. Lionblaze poked Bramblestar in the side with his sharp claws. "Bramblestar, the Gathering!" Lionblaze meowed.

Bramblestar leaped to his feet, his amber eyes smoldering.

“Leave me alone!” he snarled ferociously. “Who cares about the stupid Gathering?”

Lionblaze flinched, but he didn’t step back. “Get out of my den!” Bramblestar snarled, rushing forward with his claws unsheathed. Lionblaze turned around and trotted out of Bramblestar’s den. It was a battle he could have easily won, but he would never hurt his leader. “Let all cats gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!” he called from the Highledge, trying to keep his voice from trembling.

“Bramblestar is unable to take us to the Gathering,” Lionblaze said. “I will take Grasspaw, Sandstorm, Lilyblossom, Cherrypelt, Brackenfur, Thornclaw, Blossomfall, Dovewing, Ivypool, Icecloud, Molefur, Groundpaw, Cavepaw, Bumblestripe, Falcontail, Floodface, Wavefur, Dustpelt, Woodpelt, Cloudtail, Brightheart, and Seedfur.”

“No, not him!” Shadecloud exclaimed, thrusting her way through the crowd as soon as she heard Seedfur’s name.

“Why, Shadecloud?” Lionblaze asked, confusedly.

“Just don’t!” she said, sharing a glance with Sandstorm.

Lionblaze hesitated. “You’re a medicine cat, Shadecloud. Sorry, Seedfur,” he meowed finally. The young warrior dipped his head. “I’ll take Flowerburst instead.”

He leaped down from the Highledge, and the cats followed him out of camp.
****

When ThunderClan arrived at the Gathering, the other Clans were already there. The full moon was shining brightly, casting a white glow on the cats below. As Lionblaze leaped up to sit beside the leaders of the other Clans, Rowanstar sneered, “I thought ThunderClan wasn’t coming again. Has your precious little Bramblestar died?”

Lionblaze looked at him calmly. “Bramblestar is ill and

cannot attend the Gathering tonight," he meowed. *Mentally,* he added to himself.

Mistystar stepped forward and called for silence. "Mintfur, Pebblefoot, and Icewing drove a fox out of our territory two sunrises ago, and all is well in RiverClan. " She stepped back so that Rowanstar could speak.

"The black liquid seems to be slowly disappearing from our territory. ShadowClan is still strong, and we will show any invaders that we are," he meowed with a hostile glance at Lionblaze. Then, he stepped back and Ashstar stepped forward.

"We scented rogue cats at the far edge of our territory but the scent was obviously stale. And we have two new warriors, Birdwing and Lakeclaw," Ashstar meowed, and every cat chanted their names.

"WindClan is thriving and ready for the approaching leaf-bare," she finished, stepping back and nodding at Lionblaze.

"ThunderClan is doing well," Lionblaze meowed. "We have three new apprentices; Grasspaw, Groundpaw, and Cavepaw." The cats chanted their name, except for ShadowClan, who remained silent.

"Our prey is rich and plentiful now that ShadowClan has stopped stealing it," he continued with a pointed glance at Rowanstar. "ThunderClan is ready for the harsh leaf-bare."

As the Gathering dispersed, Lionblaze wondered if what he said was true. With Bramblestar in the mental state that he was in, was ThunderClan truly ready for the coming leaf-bare?

Chapter 3: Shadecloud

SHADECLOUD

Shadecloud trotted up to Lionblaze at the end of the Gathering. “Lionblaze,” she began. “You’re our leader now, and every cat knows it. “

“No,” he said, shaking his head. “I’m not your leader yet.”

“Bramblestar is not capable of leading this Clan. What I’m saying is this; don’t ask him to do things like taking us to the Gathering. You’ll do those things until the old Bramblestar returns,” she meowed.

“If he returns,” Lionblaze meowed, voicing Shadecloud’s unsaid doubts.

“We must believe that he will return to the leader that he once was,” Shadecloud meowed. “StarClan will walk with us, every step of the way.”

“Shadecloud, why did you want Seedfur not to go to the Gathering?” he asked her.

Shadecloud looked at him, but didn’t answer. They walked back to camp in silence. Shadecloud walked into her den and fell asleep.

In her dream, she was standing by the shore of the lake when an unfamiliar voice whispered, “The battle is coming. Be prepared.”

She woke up and looked around the camp. It looked as peaceful as ever. Suddenly, Dovewing’s neck fur started to bristle. “ShadowClan is coming to attack our camp!” she hissed.

All cats tensed, but they heard and smelled nothing. Quite a few moments later, they heard the loud pawsteps and smelled the terrible stench of ShadowClan. “ShadowClan, attack!” Shadecloud heard Rowanstar shout.

ThunderClan was ready though. Their claws were already unsheathed and, thanks to Dovewing's supernatural senses, ShadowClan did not have the element of surprise on their side. A small black ShadowClan apprentice, who barely looked six moons old, flung herself at Shadecloud. "This is not your battle," Shadecloud hissed, grabbing her by the scruff and holding her in the air.

Shadecloud set the apprentice down on the ground, and the young she-cat turned tail and fled. Shadecloud watched her as she ran out of camp, her skinny tail drooping on the ground. Suddenly, Toadfoot leaped onto her back. Shadecloud rolled over, hissing, and flattened Toadfoot beneath her. Rolling back onto to her belly and leaping to her feet, she pinned Toadfoot to the ground before he could stand back up. She raked her claws down his side repeatedly until some cat dragged her off of Toadfoot. Twisting around, ready to rake her claws across her opponent's nose, she was surprised to see Ivypool. Turning her head, she saw Toadfoot fleeing through the thorn barrier. Ivypool meowed, "He was defeated. You have to let them go when they are defeated."

Around them, the battle was breaking up. Finally, Rowanstar, with blood dripping from a long wound on his chest, said, "ShadowClan, retreat!"

Shadecloud decided to see if Bramblestar was okay. When she padded into his den, he was fighting Tigerheart with a wild light in his eyes. He had pinned Tigerheart against the wall of his den and was opening his jaws, going for the death blow.

"Bramblestar, no!" Shadecloud said, as her leader's teeth sank into Tigerheart's neck. The ShadowClan warrior twitched once and lay still. "Bramblestar, you killed him!"

The wild light faded from Bramblestar's eyes and he sank back into his mossy nest without responding. Turning around to go get Lionblaze, she saw him watching from the entrance, his jaws gaping with horror. "Bring the body," Lionblaze meowed, his voice hoarse. "We need to bury it so that ShadowClan doesn't find it."

Shadecloud, still in shock, grabbed Tigerheart's body and dragged it

out of Bramblestar's den.

As she dragged the body out of the den, Lionblaze meowed solemnly, "Shadecloud, the old Bramblestar is definitely gone."

Chapter 4: Lionblaze

LIONBLAZE

Lionblaze stood on the Highledge, still horrified at the scene he had just witnessed. “Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!” he called, somehow keeping his voice steady.

“Bramblestar is not the leader he once was,” Lionblaze said. “I cannot maintain the tasks of deputy and leader at the same time. Until the old Bramblestar returns, I need a cat to serve as my deputy temporarily.”

“Sandstorm,” he said. Glancing at Sandstorm, he saw a look of surprise in her eyes. “You will be my deputy.”

“You didn’t say it with the right words!” Graystripe called from the back of the group.

Lionblaze glared at him. “I'm not dead and neither is Bramblestar. There is no need for a proper naming ceremony,” he hissed.

“No cat goes into Bramblestar’s den. He is not the cat he once was,” Lionblaze meowed. “Any problems should be reported to me or Sandstorm. If neither of us are here, report to Jayfeather or Shadecloud.”

He leaped down from the Highledge to have a word with Sandstorm. “Beware of a warrior no cat can trust,” a voice said behind. He spun around to see Shadecloud. “Who?” he asked.

Shadecloud didn’t answer. She said, “This warrior seems loyal, but in the end he will try to kill you.”

Lionblaze thought she saw her glance at a cat behind him. Seedfur, Sandstorm, Berrynose, Brackenfur, and Falcontail were

talking together, each eating a piece of fresh-kill. Why had Shadecloud chosen now to say this, right after he'd appointed a temporary deputy? Was Sandstorm a traitor? No, Shadecloud had said he. Who was this traitor?

Lionblaze walked up to Sandstorm. "I've already finished creating the patrols for today. You'll start tomorrow," he meowed.

Sandstorm nodded. "Thank you for choosing me, Lionblaze," she said.

Lionblaze nodded and padded back towards the warriors' den. Shadecloud was still watching him intensely. "You have been warned," she whispered as she padded towards her den. "Yes, you have been warned."

Chapter 5: Bramblestar

BRAMBLESTAR

A flame-colored tom stood in front of Bramblestar in his dream. “Didn’t I tell you not to mourn Squirrelflight for too long?” he hissed, his green eyes blazing.

“Firestar, you stole her from me!” Bramblestar hissed.

He leaped at Firestar, his unsheathed claws glinting in the sunlight. Firestar crashed to the ground, snarling. The former ThunderClan leader pushed himself to his feet, throwing Bramblestar across the clearing. Bramblestar forced his aching legs to stand, and charged at Firestar again. His claws raked over Firestar’s nose, spattering scarlet blood onto Firestar’s muzzle. Firestar slashed his claws down Bramblestar’s side, and Bramblestar staggered as his mentor rammed his head into Bramblestar’s side. Firestar leaped, trying to land on Bramblestar’s back, but Bramblestar rolled out of the way. He slammed his left forepaw onto Firestar’s chest. Firestar, who was trying to rise to his feet again, fell to the ground. Bramblestar opened his jaws, preparing for the death blow.

Suddenly, sharp teeth grabbed his scruff and dragged him off of Firestar. It was Squirrelflight. “That’s my father and he was right!” she hissed furiously. “Quit grieving for me and take care of your Clan!”

“My Clan,” he murmured.

Bramblestar suddenly realized that he had been a terrible leader lately. He had to change things. “I'm sorry, Firestar,” he meowed to the ginger tom. “And to you, Squirrelflight.”

Squirrelflight nodded. “Go back to your Clan,” she said softly.

Bramblestar woke in his nest and rose to his feet. He padded slowly out of his den and looked around. “Brackenfur, Thornclaw, Floodface, and Falcontail,” Sandstorm was saying. “Go and patrol the ShadowClan border.”

Lionblaze, Bramblestar’s deputy, was eating a vole beside Cinderheart. He glanced worriedly up at Bramblestar’s den and looked shocked to see Bramblestar making his way slowly out of his den. Lionblaze dashed over to where he was standing. “Hello, Bramblestar,” the ThunderClan deputy meowed warily, staring at his paws.

Bramblestar stared at him, feeling a pang of regret. “Lionblaze,” Bramblestar said softly. “I'm so sorry.”

Lionblaze gazed up at Bramblestar. “Shadecloud was right. You have returned,” Lionblaze meowed.

Bramblestar stood on the Highledge and he could feel the gazes of his Clanmates scorching his fur. “Cats of ThunderClan, I'm sorry for the way I've acted over this past moon. But now, that is over, and I know that we must deal with ShadowClan. Brackenfur, Lionblaze, Sandstorm, Bumblestripe, Cherrypelt, Molefur, Lilyblossom, Ivypool, Rosepetal, Icecloud, Toadstep, Thornclaw, Dustpelt, Berrynose, Mousewhisker, Groundpaw, Grasspaw, Cavepaw, Cloudtail, Brightheart, Seedfur, Blossomfall, Millie, Spiderleg, Floodface, Flowerburst, Sorreltail, Poppyfrost, Birchfall, and Falcontail, you will come with me.”

Graystripe objected. “Bramblestar, you're only leaving two warriors in camp!”

“So be it,” Bramblestar meowed. “We must deal with ShadowClan and we must win!”

A few murmurs of agreement rose from the crowd. He leaped down from the Highledge, the wind ruffling his fur. He ran through the forest, his legs flying through the air as he leaped over a tree branch. They flew through the forest, racing across the border. A border patrol was easily brought down, leaving the ShadowClan warriors dazed. The ThunderClan cats slowed down as

they neared the ShadowClan camp. They halted by the entrance to the camp. “Half of you stay here so that they think we have fewer cats. But when you hear my cry, come running,” he whispered. Then, raising his voice, he yowled, “ThunderClan, attack!”

Half of the cats rushed down into the clearing. Rowanstar looked at Bramblestar and sneered, “Do you think this many cats can beat us, Bramblest…” he broke off as Bramblestar slammed into his side, sending him crashing to the ground.

The ThunderClan cats were easily outnumbered. They were losing the battle and tiring quickly. “Attack!” he cried loudly.

“What do you think that’s going to do?” Rowanstar hissed, then blinked in confusion as more cats came rushing down into ShadowClan’s camp.

Bramblestar dug his claws into Rowanstar’s belly, tearing clumps of fur from his belly. “Had enough?” Bramblestar snarled finally. “Leave us alone or else you know what to expect.”

“ShadowClan, retreat!” Rowanstar said, and it sounded as if the words pained him.

“ThunderClan, let’s go!” Bramblestar called. Yowls of triumph rose from the ThunderClan warriors.

Squirrelflight’s death had finally been avenged.

Chapter 6: Shadecloud

SHADECLOUD

Shadecloud padded back to her nest after Bramblestar left. What a relief it was that he had finally returned to the leader he once was. She laid down and fell asleep.

Shadecloud opened her eyes to find herself lying by the Moonpool. An unfamiliar golden tom was sitting in front of her, his pelt full of stars. “Who are you?” she asked the StarClan warrior.

“My name is Lionheart,” he meowed in a deep voice and Shadecloud recognized his voice as the one from her dream before the battle with ShadowClan. “The battle has not yet come, and it is not with ShadowClan.”

“What? Who is it with then?” Shadecloud asked. But the starry warrior was already fading and she opened her eyes in the medicine cat den again.

Bramblestar was padding into camp, holding his head triumphantly. “You won?” Shadecloud asked distractedly.

“Yes,” Bramblestar meowed. “We taught ShadowClan a lesson!”

She noticed Seedfur grabbing a mouse and slinking over to the entrance with it. She tried to follow him, but she heard Jayfeather’s soft meow behind her. “What?” she hissed, annoyed.

Jayfeather stared at her. “Seedfur,” he said finally. “Two battles have passed.”

Shadecloud realized that Jayfeather had been reading her mind. “Stay out of this!” she said. “This is my battle!”

She darted towards Seedfur. She heard Bramblestar meowing a greeting behind her, but she ignored him. She picked up

Seedfur's scent, heading towards ShadowClan territory. She followed it, and it turned towards the abandoned Twoleg nest where Jayfeather gathered catmint. She lost halfway to the nest.

Hissing with frustration, Shadecloud padded back into camp. Seedfur was nowhere to be seen. Lionblaze was talking with Bramblestar near the Highledge, oblivious to the fact that that Shadecloud or Seedfur had been missing.

Seedfur and Thorn were still out there and she had to stop them before it was too late!

Chapter 7: Shadecloud

SHADECLOUD

Seedfur returned just before sundown. He was still carrying the mouse in his teeth, and he slipped back into camp unnoticed. He was walking towards where Lionblaze was resting. The ThunderClan deputy lifted his head as Seedfur approached with the mouse. Shadecloud crept closer to them.

“Seedfur!” Lionblaze greeted the brown warrior. Seedfur had been named as a kit after Seedpaw, who had died of greencough. He himself had almost died of greencough that same leaf-bare as a kit. Why had StarClan let him survive?

“Where were you today?” Lionblaze asked.

“Hunting,” Seedfur lied.

“Good. The Clan is hungry after a battle like that,” Lionblaze meowed.

“You must be too,” the traitor meowed. “I brought you this mouse. You can just relax and eat.”

“Thanks,” Lionblaze said.

Seedfur dropped the mouse at his paws. Shadecloud could hear Thorn’s voice saying, “Just stuff a mouse with deathberries. It’s truly simple.”

She raced forward. Time seemed to slow as she shoved Seedfur away from Lionblaze and pulled the mouse away with her paw. “Shadecloud, what is wrong with you? I was trying to eat!” Lionblaze hissed, confused.

“Eat a mouse stuffed with deathberries,” she growled, turning towards Seedfur.

“Traitor!” she spat at him.

Shadecloud reached her slender paw down the mouse’s throat. She dug her claws into something cold. Sure enough, her claws came up with scarlet berries hooked on them. Lionblaze stared at her in disbelief. “Seedfur? What have you done?” he asked, stunned.

Seedfur glared at Shadecloud with undisguised hatred in his icy blue eyes. “The same thing Tigerstar would have done!” he hissed.

Chapter 8: Bramblestar

BRAMBLESTAR

Bramblestar was glad that they had defeated ShadowClan. But he still had an uneasy feeling, as if something were about to happen. And then he heard a loud hiss, and he only caught one word of it. It pierced through the air like the sharpest claw. Bramblestar knew he had heard some cat say, “Tigerstar.”

He ran out of his den and onto the Highledge. He saw Lionblaze leaping at Seedfur while Shadecloud stood nearby. Within seconds, Lionblaze had Seedfur pinned to the ground. The ThunderClan deputy hissed, “Bramblestar, help me drag him over to the Highledge.”

By now, a crowd had come to see what was happening. Bramblestar stared at Lionblaze. “What has Seedfur done?” Bramblestar asked.

“He just tried to kill Lionblaze. He stuffed a mouse with deathberries and gave it to Lionblaze,” Shadecloud meowed, answering for Lionblaze.

Bramblestar helped drag Seedfur beneath the Highledge. Bramblestar leaped up onto the Highledge and shouted, “Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!”

It was almost unnecessary. Nearly the whole Clan was already staring at him intently and glancing at Seedfur, who was trying to escape from Lionblaze’s grasp. “Seedfur, stand,” he hissed. "Do you have anything to say for yourself?"

Lionblaze stepped back into the crowd. Only Shadecloud remained next to Seedfur, glaring at him. “There’s nothing to say!” Seedfur snarled.

“Traitor!” Brackenfur hissed from the back of the group. The rest of ThunderClan picked up until the whole group was chanting, “Traitor! Traitor!”

“Then you will be exiled from ThunderClan. If you are caught on our territory after sunhigh tomorrow, my warriors have permission to kill you,” Bramblestar meowed.

Seedfur stood beneath him, staring defiantly into Bramblestar’s amber eyes. “I won’t leave until I've brought you down,” he hissed loudly.

He leaped at Bramblestar and no warrior was near enough to stop him.

Chapter 9: Shadecloud

SHADECLOUD

Shadecloud leaped up into the air and crashed into Seedfur, sending him flying sideways. They landed on the ground heavily, and rolled down towards the crowd. Her bones were aching, but she refused to release Seedfur. Seedfur swung a paw at her muzzle and blood dripped from the wound. Shadecloud released her grip on Seedfur and skidded to a halt in front of Thornclaw.

Forcing herself to her feet, she saw Seedfur rising to his paws to her right. She sprang at him and swiped a paw down his side. He hissed and kicked out with his hind paws. Shadecloud went flying across the clearing and slammed into the ground.

Her head spun and her entire body felt as if it had been hit by a monster. “Shadecloud, are you okay?” Falcontail asked.

It took all of Shadecloud’s strength to pull herself to her paws. “Fine,” she coughed.

She staggered towards Seedfur. Thornclaw was ready to leap at Seedfur, but Blossomfall was restraining him. “This is Shadecloud’s battle,” Blossomfall whispered softly.

Seedfur leaped at her with his jaws wide open and aiming for her neck. She barely managed to dodge the death blow. She knew she had to finish this. She leaped into the air and landed on Seedfur’s back. She opened her jaws and sank them into his neck.

Seedfur collapsed to the ground and twitched once before dying. Shadecloud fell to the ground, exhausted and victorious. Jayfeather tended to her wounds with cobwebs after Brackenfur and her father, Thornclaw, dragged her into his den.

Bramblestar and Lionblaze walked into the den sometime the next day. “How did you know, Shadecloud?” Lionblaze asked.

“I saw him talking to a gray cat named Thorn,” Shadecloud meowed.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Bramblestar asked.

Shadecloud snorted. “Like that would’ve done a lot of good,” she said.

He winced at her words. “I'm sorry about that. Thank you, Shadecloud. You saved me and my deputy,” he meowed softly.

As the two cats walked out of the den, Shadecloud pulled herself to her feet, gingerly placing her sore right forepaw on the ground. She limped to follow them, and Lionheart’s voice whispered in her ears, “The battle has been won.”

Epilogue

EPILOGUE

Shadecloud walked unsteadily out of the medicine cat den behind Lionblaze and Bramblestar. Floodface and Poppyfrost were dragging Seedfur's lifeless body out of camp.

"Maybe we can have some peace for once," Lionblaze meowed.

Shadecloud replied, "Thorn is still out there."

"Maybe he won't attack us, "Lionblaze meowed unconvincingly.

"No," Shadecloud said darkly. "Thorn will do whatever it takes to kill us all."

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From the uppermost branches of the Sky Oak, a gray cat stared down into the ThunderClan camp as they dragged Seedfur's body away. Thorn's icy blue eyes gazed at Shadecloud in particular, burning with hatred. They were full of evil intentions and the desire for revenge. Seedfur wouldn't die pointlessly. Thorn would avenge his death.

"She may have killed Seedfur," he meowed frostily. "But the battle is far from over. I will return soon and they will all pay."

The young cat made his way gracefully down the Sky Oak, leaping from branch to branch until he was near enough to jump to the ground. He hit the ground with a faint thud and Thorn padded away into the morning shadows.

Excerpt from Warriors: The Unknown Threat Series Book #3: Returning Enemy

PROLOGUE

A gray cat slunk through the moorland, comfortable in the cool night shadows. He walked slowly, his blue eyes scanning the landscape. Suddenly he paused and tasted the air. Pressing himself against the ground, he watched as a rabbit darted past him, a black warrior close behind it. The gray cat narrowed his eyes and leaped high into the air, landing on the black warrior's back. The black cat fell to the ground and stared at the gray cat in surprise.

"What is your name, you puny scrap?" the gray cat said, his voice sounding strange due to moons of not using it.

The black cat didn't answer. There was unmistakably terror in his eyes. "StarClan save me," the black cat whispered, too soft for the gray cat to hear.

"What's your name?" the gray cat snarled.

The black cat blinked. "Crowfeather," he meowed, his voice shaking.

"Well, Crowfeather, you are about to be killed by Thorn," the gray cat growled.

He sank his sharp yellow teeth into Crowfeather's neck and the warrior went limp. Thorn watched, satisfied, as blood oozed quickly from the WindClan cat's neck and his breathing stopped. Thorn turned and trotted onwards until he reached the border.

He took a deep breath. "ThunderClan, I'm back," Thorn said. "And it is time for revenge."

Thorn walked through the forest until he reached a hollow surrounded by smooth stone walls. His piercing eyes searched for one cat and they hardened as they saw the black cat emerging from the medicine cat den with catmint in her jaws. Sunkit had caught greencough near the end of leaf-bare and was almost completely better. Shadecloud, the black she-cat, was giving the kit the last of the catmint and her blind mentor called, “Thank StarClan no other cats caught greencough this leaf-bare.”

Thorn turned away, tail twitching, and as he crept away, moving silently over the leafy ground, he hissed, “Oh, Shadecloud, your death is near.”